Kentucky Literacy Link

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A Publication of the Kentucky Department of Education *Rebecca Woosley, editor*

Inside This Issue:

A Call for Contributions:

How are you integrating digital literacy into the curriculum? How are your students learning to communicate thoughts, ideas, concepts or even questions effectively using 21st-century technology?

In the April issue of *Kentucky Literacy Link*, we want to share examples of how Kentucky teachers are teaching students to use digital literacy as they develop their communication skills.

If you will e-mail a brief description of what you are doing to rebecca.woosley@education.ky.gov by March 1, we'll contact you and include your strategy, along with strategies from your peers across the state, so Kentucky teachers and their students can learn from each other.

Items of Interest

KCTE/LA 75th Anniversary Conference

Teaching Moving Forward/Looking Back – 21st Century and Learning

When? February 25 and 26, 2011

Where? Marriott – Cincinnati at River Center

To register and receive more complete information, visit http://conference.kcte.org/.

EdSteps' Work Collection for Creativity:

Kentucky teachers can contribute to and use this valuable resource.

The Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO's) EdSteps program is now officially collecting work samples that demonstrate creativity.

EdSteps is an innovative online resource for teaching and assessment that is being built by people from every corner of the country and across the globe who submit and review student work samples. The work is focused on five skill areas that are important to college and career readiness and are typically difficult and costly to assess: writing, global competence, creativity, problem solving and analyzing information. In order to foster creativity in schools, educators must have a practical means of appreciating, understanding and assessing creativity in partnership with their students.

EdSteps is seeking creativity work samples that represent a broad spectrum of student work in terms of grade level, subject area, demographics, ability level and geography. It can be a video of a school play or a picture. It can be a graph about baseball statistics or a poem.

After EdSteps collects the student work in each of the skill areas, the public reviews the work and ultimately, it will be

presented in a continuum — a gradual progression — from emerging to accomplished work. **Teachers, parents and students will be able to access the continuums online to answer central questions for student growth**: Where is a particular student now and what should he or she do to improve?

To help build EdSteps by submitting work or reviewing work, visit www.edsteps.org or contact info@edsteps.org for more information.

EdSteps is being designed by Council of Chief State School Officers; *The New York Times*; and partners from state departments of education, school districts, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations and businesses. EdSteps is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The National WWII Museum announces 2011 Essay Contest Theme

The National WWII Museum is sponsoring the 2011 Essay Contest Theme for all high school and middle school students. This year the students are asked to write an essay exploring how and why the United States went to war 70 years ago, addressing the question *"Why should we remember Pearl Harbor?"*

High school students have the chance to win as much as $1,000. Middle school students can win $250. Winning essays will be posted on the museum's website.

The National WWII Museum is dedicated to exploring the history and lessons of WWII with America's youth. These annual Student Essay Contests give high school and middle school students across the country an opportunity to express themselves creatively while focusing on the meaning and legacy of the WWII years.

For more information about the contest rules and deadlines, please visit the National WWII website at www.nationalww2museum.org/essaycontests. If you have questions, please contact Kenneth Hoffman at (504) 528-1944, ext. 225 or e–mail him at educator@nationalww2museum.org.

College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards - A Spotlight on Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

CCR Anchor Standards for Writing - 7, 8 & 9:

7. *Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.*

8. *Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.*

9. *Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.*

The overall goal of the standards relevant to research is to help students "…develop the capacity to build knowledge on a subject through research projects and to respond analytically to literary and informational sources." The CCR standards are the ultimate outcome, and to achieve that outcome, the expectation is that all students from kindergarten through 12th grade will actively engage in research and writing projects.

Requirements in Standard 7 progress from kindergarten students participating in shared research and writing projects, to high school students conducting short and sustained research projects intended to answer a question, solve a problem or synthesize multiple sources on the subject being investigated.

Standard 8 requirements begin with kindergarten students conducting research to gather information from provided sources to answer a question with the guidance and support from adults. At the other end of the progression high school students are expected to "gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced

searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation".

Standard 9 is the same basic standard for grade 4, where it begins, all the way through high school: "draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research." At each grade the standard is applied to reading grade-level literature and informational texts.

The bottom line is that all students should be engaged in using research skills for a variety of purposes from the time they enter elementary school until they exit high school. The instruction that supports how effectively students use all the research skills covered in the standards will not only support 21st-century communication skills, but also the collaboration skills students need to prepare them for college and careers.

Creating Possibilities

Involving students in research is a process of discovery that builds vital skills for today's learners, yet, according to research by Applebee and Langer in *Writing Now*, a publication by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the amount of time spent on writing instruction has decreased over the last decade. *Writing Now* makes the additional point that time spent on writing and research has also decreased over the last decade. However, if students are going to be prepared with the writing, research, collaboration and critical thinking skills, they will need to meet the requirements for 21st-century jobs and they must have multiple opportunities to practice applying those skills.

Teaching students to use research skills effectively is a process some teachers would like to avoid because of the frustrations they encounter. Some teachers are frustrated because students just copy quotes and piece them together rather than using what they've found in their research to support their own ideas or to question the critics. In many cases teachers are frustrated because their students plagiarize – even after instruction and guidance intended to preclude plagiarism. These frustrations can be avoided, or at least minimized, if teachers scaffold the instruction and use what research reveals about learner needs.

Both research and classroom experience validate that learners want to feel competent and in control in the classroom. What's more, students want to be engaged and involved in learning, and they want choices about what they read and write.

Knowing what learners want, incorporating the 21st-century skills they need, and understanding the research-learning requirements in the writing standards, it's important to give students opportunities to construct facts and develop their thinking as a result of a disciplined, social process of inquiry.

When developing the foundational research skills that students need, one place to begin is teaching students to locate and evaluate authentic primary sources.

Evaluating Sources

A look at the research products students often turn in shows that many students know little about how to judge the quality of information they find on the Web, and they also know little about how to search effectively beyond using search engines like Google or Yahoo. These learning targets need to be part of the instructional scaffold when students of all ages are learning effective research skills.

There are several sites and sources that recommend some basic characteristics students should look for when they evaluate sources. The evaluation criteria in the list that follows were suggested by Jonathan Ostenson in the May 2009 issue of *English Journal* ,but they also are listed in many online sources.

To evaluate the quality of online resources, student should look for -

- information about the website author that will help the user make judgments about the authority and credibility of the author
- details that suggest that the author may have commercial motives (Is the writer trying to sell something? Will the writer profit in any way from actions site-users take? Are there advertisements on the page that would suggest that the writer has a vested interest in the actions user may take?)
- specifics about how the message/information is constructed suggesting a writer bias that influences the validity of the information (Is there a hidden agenda? Does the writer use provocative words to influence the thinking of the reader?)
- possible ways to corroborate the online information using trusted sources (Can the information be corroborated in at least three other trusted sources?)

- details about the timeliness of the site (How current is the information? When was it updated?)
- links included by the author that provide additional information and suggest the validity or the information found at the original site
- features about the overall layout of the site that might suggest amateurs created it (Are the formatting features similar to those used by personal blogs or message boards - venues that often rely on personal opinion more than facts?)

One way to help elementary and secondary students take ownership of evaluating websites is to ask them to provide a written defense of any website they've chosen to include in their research. That defense should include some brief information about how they corroborated the information they found. Begin by modeling the practice for students and then ask them to write a defense on their own. This strategy moves the student from being a user of quotes to becoming a critical evaluator of research sources and the evidence they collect from research.

Ostenson concludes his article by reflecting, "If we hope to prepare them [students] for a successful life outside the classroom, it is imperative that we help them learn to read critically as they use the Internet." This is especially important considering recent trends, because students are likely to spend most of their lives accessing and using information from online sources.

Collaborating: Moving Thinking Forward

Writing Now proposes several research-based recommendations for teachers that will support effective writing instruction. One of the primary recommendations for teachers is to "foster collaborative writing processes." If teachers make collaborative writing and collaborative thinking a part of the research and writing instruction process, it will engage students by actively involving them in the learning.

Collaborative research and writing provide many benefits to learners. The research *Writing Now* is based on validates that one of the outcomes of peer collaboration for all writers is that they develop a sense of the needs of the audience. In addition, Nancy Zimmet, in an article on collaborative writing published in the *English Journal,* suggests that collaboration helps students see the value of considering different perspectives. She also emphasized how much collaborative research helps move students' thinking to higher levels, partly because they have to defend their ideas. To defend their ideas, Zimmet observed that students have to read texts more carefully than has been their former habit. It follows that students also will have to defend the validity of their research. As a result, they have to more carefully evaluate their research sources in order to defend their evidence.

Authentic Writing / Inquiry-Based Research

Writing Now asserts the need for students to learn how to develop all the kinds of writing they will encounter as a part of their real-world experiences. As a result, writing practice based on inquiry will actively engage students and prepare them for the kinds of communication experiences and tasks they will need in the real world.

Inquiry research does not have to result in a report or research paper. The language in standard 7, "Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation," clearly includes short-term and long-term research opportunities for students. Research based on focused questions and research projects that will demonstrate what students learn about an issue, topic or subject may lead to single-day research tasks or involve longer-term research. The resulting products may include some of the following: visual and oral presentations, seminar discussions with all students contributing and enhancing each other's understanding, notes on reading, academic analysis, memos, technical reports, multi-media presentations, Web pages and many other products.

So what does this mean for Kentucky learners?

If teachers provide students literacy experiences that engage their interests and develop their analytical thinking, as they synthesize information gathered from multiple, carefully-evaluated sources, students will have opportunities to develop the critical next-generation skills they will need for a successful future.

References

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. (2010). Washington, D.C. Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K. (2000). Tailoring the fit: Reading instruction and middle school readers. *The Reading Teacher, 54.*

Ostenson, J. (2009). Skeptics on the Internet: Teaching Students to Read Critically. *English Journal, 98.5.*

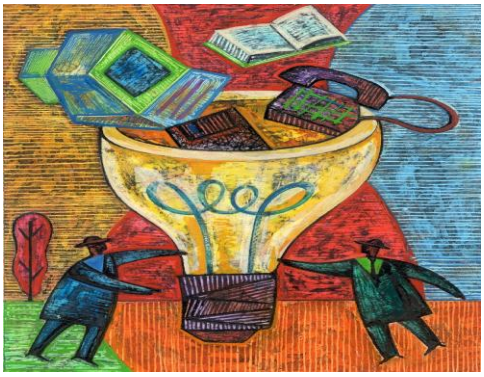
Ryan, R. & Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25.*

Writing Now. (2008). A Policy Research Brief published by the National Council of Teachers of English.

Zimmet, Nancy. (2000). Engaging the Disaffected: Collaborative Writing across the Curriculum Projects. *English Journal. September.*

To download copies of all the standards documents referenced in this article, go to this site:

http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards



If we reduce the research paper to a set of steps or a scientific method, then we've taken the choice out of the assignment and it becomes an exercise in conformity for students.

Wirtz, J. (2006). Creating Possibilities: Embedding Research into Creative Writing. *English Journal.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE.

Turning the Page

Sharing a Literacy Strategy

Writing with a Purpose: Using a Collaborative Process of Inquiry

To avoid what Wirtz refers to in the quote above, teachers may consider the lesson sequence presented here. It is a model intended to demonstrate how teachers can incorporate reading, writing, speaking and listening standards into an integrated set of lessons designed around strategies to teach students how to conduct, evaluate and use research. The sequence of lessons does not include specific learning targets that will need to be embedded throughout the process, but it does suggest a broad, basic scaffold for disciplined inquiry.

1. Begin by brainstorming the research topic or aspects of the topic with the whole class. For example, if immigration has been the issue, event or concept lessons have focused on, lead the class to contribute questions or topics that are aspects of the issue surrounding the overall topic of immigration.

2. Guide student to narrow the focus to about 20 issues related to the target topic.

3. Ask students to choose three issues from the target topic list. Explain that they should bring to class annotated bibliographies of the sources they research for each issue.

4. Give students at least 3-5 days to find all the research they can on the three issues they choose. (When making the assignment, it's important to communicate to students the expectations about the kinds and minimum number of sources. For example, are they expected to use articles, scholarly journals, primary sources or other items.?)

5. If students do not already know how to analyze and evaluate their sources, they will need lessons that target those skills included at this point.

6. Engage teams in discussions applying the source evaluation criteria mentioned in this issue of *Literacy Link*. Here are some additional questions to guide those discussions:

   > Is the organization the author is associated with respected?

   >Is there evidence of quality control? (as with a juried journal)

   >Does the source provide comprehensive information?

   >Does the source only summarize or does it analyze?

   >Why is the source important?

>How does it broaden your insight?

>How does it help you understand the issue?

>Is the information adequate? (e.g., What new questions do you have?)

7. The discussions students have analyzing and evaluating the sources they have used may take place over several class periods. Those collaborative team discussions will lead students to several insights. Students may realize that they can trust their source, that some of their sources should not be used because they aren't valid or that they need to do more research. Many students will realize that a source other students contributed to the discussion contains valuable information they need to answer other questions they have.

8. Be sure to process the insights students are having in their collaborative teams with whole-group discussions at critical points during the discussion periods. Some of those discussions may center on evaluating the sources, but ultimately, the discourse will turn to the issues students are researching. They will share insights and even change their minds as they are exposed to other perspectives and points of view that are validated by research.

9. Ask students to modify their annotated bibliographies showing why a source has been eliminated and providing evaluation justification for those they keep or add. Obviously, students will need some additional time to research and discuss new sources. Discussions the second time around should not take as long, but it is important for all students to have access to all the valid resources consulted during the process and to have a chance to talk about the sources and the information they located.

10. At this point, teachers need to design lessons that will give students a chance to practice assembling some paragraphs, integrating the research to support their own insights and ideas into the paragraph. (NOTE: Students do not need to formulate a thesis or a controlling idea at this point, nor do they need to decide what form their ultimate product will take. The only learning target here is teaching students how to use their research to effectively develop an idea or make a point based on some of the research evidence they've encounter. That research evidence may come from one of their sources or from one of the sources they've learned about in discussions with their peers.)

11. In order to develop students' listening skills and their discourse skills, allow them sufficient time during each class to have collaborative and whole group discussions about their new sources and new insights.

12. As students move through this process they will begin to form natural collaborative teams made up of students with common interests; this makes whole class discussions critical. To build effective arguments and to develop deeper insights, students need to be exposed to different perspectives or to evidence they may attempt to refute later. These discussions may also lead them to question their previous ideas.

13. Next, ask students to choose their own issue, and explain that they may use the collaborative research from sources that have already been evaluated by the class as support to develop their own ideas. (Essentially, students only need to be able to formulate a purpose/thesis statement at this point.)

14. The next discussion with students should be about audience, purpose and form. When students determine who their target audience is, it may cause them to refine their purpose. Guiding them through a discussion on the relationship between purpose and form will help them make logical decisions.

15. As students choose purposes about issues they are interested and invested in, their motivation and engagement improves. Because each student will produce his or her own product and the forms they choose will vary, teachers will want to consider individualizing instruction in collaborative teams.

16. Students will still need reinforcement about how to document sources, guidance organizing their ideas and integrating their research as support for their own ideas, but they will be far less likely to plagiarize, because all the valid sources they will use are known to the teacher and to their peers.

17. As students work through the process of drafting and revising their research products, continue to engage them in collaborative teams. Giving meaningful feedback to their peers will not be difficult for them,

because they know about the issues. The resulting peer response at this stage in the process is relevant and valuable to each writer.

18. Once students complete their research process, ask them to present their products. This can be done formally or in a seminar setting, but it is an important culminating activity. If students have published their work other ways, (e.g., sent a letter, submitted their article – maybe to the school newspaper for publication - or communicated their research to their target audience in another way) those results should be a part of the shared discussion when this process culminates. Above all else, don't let students miss the opportunity to talk about the process they just experienced.

There are many valuable outcomes of using this research instructional process for students. Students learn how to evaluate sources, especially the online sources they blindly trusted in the past. They also learn critical speaking and listening skills as they engage in deep discussions about sources and researched issues. In addition, students practice applying analytical thinking as they hear and discuss alternatives to their own thinking and as they consider arguments or positions that challenge or even change their thinking.

This process of shared inquiry and research-based writing has the potential to produce greater student achievement than teachers have seen previously from the same students. Part of the reason for student growth and achievement is that carefully crafted inquiry work prepares students' thinking so they are ready to write. The products students create during this process will also be more meaningful than students' previous work partly because they will be allowed to make choices based on their interests. Because the instruction integrates several skills, the outcomes pay multiple learning dividends.

One Last 'Reflective' Thought:

Adding a reflective step to this process is vital. Research shows that students need to think about their own thinking in order to deepen their understanding and to embed the learning in their long-term memory. Asking students to write about what they learned, and more importantly, how they learned it, needs to be a part of the process. This metacognitive step builds their confidence as writers and strengthens their competence as researchers.

Suggested Reading

Gibbons, L. (2010). *To Kill a Mockingbird in the Classroom: Walking in Someone Else's Shoes.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE.

This book examines ways of engaging students as they study Harper Lee's novel. Included is collaborative learning, discussion, writing and inquiry-based projects, as well as activities related to the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

"Toolbox: Rope Them in With Hand Gestures" by Lori Oczkus in *The Reading Teacher*, December 2010/January 2011 (Vol. 64, #4, p. 282-284), no e-link. Clips from a classroom at:

http://www.reading.org/General/Publications/Books/SupplementalContent/BK507_SUPPLEMENT.aspx

Article review contributed by -
Matthew Thompson, Scott County Director of Elementary Curriculum

Using Hand Gestures to Signal Reading Comprehension Strategies

Oczkus suggests teaching elementary students hand gestures to signal the need each of the "Fabulous Four" reading comprehension skills:

• *Predicting* – Students put their hands around an imaginary crystal ball to evoke the image of a fortune teller predicting the future.

• *Questioning* – Students hold a pretend microphone in front of their mouths to evoke the image of an interviewer asking questions. Accompanying words: "Why do you think…?" and "I wonder why, what, how, when, where or who."

• *Clarifying* – Students from two circles with their thumbs and index fingers and put them over their eyes as if examining something closely with eyeglasses. Alternatively, they can hold their two hands vertically in front of them to signify a TV remote pause button – *Hold it for a moment while we think and figure out difficult words or confusing passages.*

• *Summarizing* – Students whirl an imaginary lasso over their heads to "rope in" the main ideas of a text and create a summary.

Allington, R., ed. (2010) ***Essential Readings on Struggling Learners.*** **IRA.**

This collections of articles from *Reading Today*, selected and grouped by Editor Richard Allington, suggest that if teachers want to engage struggling male readers in academic topics, they should try linking book reading to interdisciplinary, practical projects such as researching histories, writing postcards, sending e-mails, following arts and crafts directions, building models, creating to-do lists, reading maps, and cooking using recipes. Exposing students to the wide array of literacies that exist beyond completing academic tasks will increase their exposure to the topic and given text and improve their ability to comprehend and retain important textual information.

Check out these links…

CTL Announces Summer 2011 PD Workshops

http://ctlonline.org/site/news_articles/ctl-announces-summer-2011-pd-workshops.html

CTL announces professional development workshops for summer 2011. Look for more information coming spring 2011. To be placed on a waiting list, e-mail CTL at info@ctlonline.org and indicate the session(s).

FREE!

http://www.freereading.net/index.php?title=Writing_Activities

The FreeReading Writing activities are organized into three categories: Introduce, Reintroduce and Build Mastery. The following is a description of the types of activities you will find within each category:

- **Introduce -** students are introduced to writing skills through a variety of activities.
- **Reintroduce -** students will complete a graphic organizer to practice the application of a writing skill.
- **Build Mastery -** students will expand their knowledge of a writing skill by engaging in a variety of activities.

Forty-Five Interesting Ways to Use Wordles

https://docs.google.com/present/view?id=ddcws83v_159nx583xg8

Wordle is a free word mapping tool on the Web that has lots of fun possibilities for the start of the school year. *45 Interesting Ways to Use Wordle in the Classroom* has suggestions for using Wordle as a tool for building curriculum and community with colleagues and students.

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